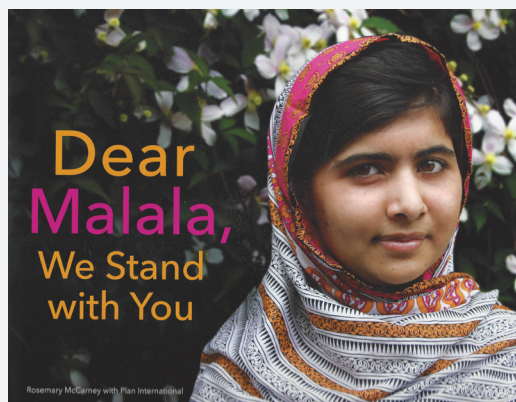


Second Reaction: Malala's Story, Our Responsibility

McCarney, Rosemary. *Dear Malala, We Stand with You*.
New York: Crown Books, 2014. Print.

Beau Scott



Education truly is the only solution. Dumbstruck is the only word I can use to describe the feeling that I had coursing through my body the day I read Malala's story in the *New York Times*. Coming from a family where education is seen as a gateway to self-improvement, it was hard for me to understand that there were people in the world who were scared . . . scared to death that a little girl wanted to go to school and she wanted others to learn, to be educated, in order to better themselves.

Rosemary McCarney's book, *Dear Malala, We Stand with You*, with its alluringly strong images of children around the world, invites thought-provoking classroom discussions that might not normally take place in the elementary setting. Students who take for granted the opportunities that they have been given, such as the opportunity to attend school, to aspire to be someone amazing, brilliant, and world-changing, cannot wrap their minds around the concept of fighting for that right. Neither can they imagine nearly dying for that opportunity.

The sense of empowerment that the young girls in my classroom exuded after I shared this story with them was intoxicating. There was a glow about them. They felt strong. They felt invincible. They felt like the world was theirs. The one question that we were all left with at the end of the book was in regard to the last line, "The world will see what girls can achieve—if only they let us" (unpaged). We came to the conclusion that what it should have said was, "The world will see what girls can achieve. The world will not stop us!"

The topic at hand may be a difficult one to bring into some classrooms—a young girl was shot in the head in the story. As an educator, I have to make decisions all the time. I ask myself one question when weighing the pros and cons of those tough choices: Will this have a positive impact upon my students? My answer after sharing Malala's story was a resounding, "Yes." Safely and assuredly I can rationalize sharing such a story about the triumph of feeling powerful with the young children that I am charged with developing each day. If Malala had the strength to stand up for her beliefs in the face of such ignorance, then I feel that not sharing her story would simply be showing cowardice, weakness, and apathy on my part.

Oftentimes we do not appreciate things until they merge with or impact our own lives. My wife, Aliya, born in England to Pakistani parents, has lived a toned-down version of Malala's story. She had to have a teacher come to her house to convince her parents to allow her to attend college. While reluctant, they allowed her to enroll. Upon returning home one weekend, they tried to fly her back to Pakistan to "marry her off." Luckily she ran away, escaping back to the University of Leicester where she was attending school. She thought she would be safe there, but unbeknownst to Aliya, her father had other plans in mind. He sent two of her uncles to kidnap her in the hope of having the marriage still take place. Thankfully, with the help of some friends, she got away and was able to continue her life on her own terms.

My point is that there are Malala stories all around the world. This book is an amazing way to bring up the topic of educational and gender repression. Boys and girls, no matter the color of their skin or their ethnicity, deserve the opportunity to grow and better themselves. *Dear Malala, We Stand with You* helped open up the lines of discussion in my classroom. After reading the story together, I feel that my students came away a little more grateful and, hopefully, with seeds of activism planted within their hearts.

About the Author

Beau Scott is a teacher at Dayton Elementary School in Dayton, Indiana. Scott is the winner of the 2015 Golden Apple Award. He is married to the beautiful Aliya Scott, who hails from London, UK. Somehow, Scott persuaded his wife to leave London and put down roots in the thriving metropolis of Battle Ground, Indiana. They reside there, along with their adorable baby, The Duke.